

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 5941

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, JA, UR, ETIS
SUBJECT: JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS AND AN OVERVIEW OF CURRENT
CONTROVERSY

SUMMARY: ATMOSPHERE OF SOVIET JAPANESE RELATIONS IS WORSE THAN IT HAS BEEN IN YEARS. SOVIETS HAVE TAKEN UNYIELDING POSITION ON NORTHERN TERRITORIAL QUESTION DURING FISHERIES TALKS, WHICH HAVE COLLAPSED, AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING, AS A RESULT. JAPANESE HAVE UNITED BEHIND THEIR GOVERNMENT IN INTENSE REACTION AGAINST SOVIETS AND SEEM UNLIKELY TO OFFER CONCESSIONS. JAPANESE SEE SOVIETS AS MOTIVATED BY DESIRE TO FORCE SOLUTION OF TERRITORIAL ISSUE; PRESSURE FOR LARGER FISH QUOTAS; PIQUE OVER HANDLING OF MIG-25 INCIDENT; AND CONCERN ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS. WHILE FONOFF, PERHAPS OVER-OPTIMISTICALLY, EXPECTS SOVIETS TO BACK OFF, AND SEES NO LONG-TERM STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN JAPANESE RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW OR PEKING EMERGING FROM CURRENT CONTROVERSY, PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO PRESIDENT CARTER ABOUT PROBLEMS WITH SOVIETS AT BILATERAL MEETING DURING COURSE OF ECONOMIC SUMMIT IN MAY. WE SEE ADVANTAGE IN AGREEING AND JAPANESE LETTING IT BE KNOWN WE HAVE LENT SYMPATHETIC EAR. END SUMMARY.

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EVOLVING IMPASSE

1. EVER SINCE FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND SOVIET UNION BEGAN IN FEBRUARY, SOVIETS HAVE ADOPTED AN UNPRECEDENTEDLY TOUGH POSITION. THEY HAVE INSISTED THAT DISPUTED NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISLANDS BE INCLUDED IN DESCRIPTION OF NEW SOVIET 200-MILE FISHERIES ZONE; DEMANDED RIGHT TO FISH WITHIN JAPAN'S NEWLY PRO-

CLAIMED TWELVE-MILE TERRITORIAL SEA; REQUIRED FORM OF PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT THAT WOULD NEED DIET APPROVAL IN JAPAN; AND SEEM SET ON BARGAINING FOR INCREASED SOVIET CATCH QUOTAS UNSUPPORTED BY HISTORICAL FISHING PATTERNS. WHEN PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA SENT CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY SONODA TO MOSCOW IN EARLY APRIL TO SEPARATE TERRITORIAL QUESTION FROM FISHERIES ISSUES, SOVIETS DELAYED ISSUING HIM A VISA AND THEN KEPT HIM WAITING FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH LEADERSHIP ONCE HE ARRIVED IN MOSCOW. (ONE LDP DIETMAN COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT JAPANESE WERE SHOCKED THAT SOVIETS LET SONODA STEW IN SECOND RATE HOTEL AFTER HIS ARRIVAL UNTIL THEY COULD FIND VACANCY IN BETTER ESTABLISHMENT.) PREMIER KOSYGIN FINALLY MET SONODA ON APRIL 5, BUT REFUSED TO BUDGE ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE; LECTURED CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY ON JAPANESE HANDLING OF MIG-25; AND DEMANDED GREATER JAPANESE CONTRIBUTION TO SIBERIAN DEVELOPMENT. WHY, FONOFF SOURCES REPORT KOSYGIN ASKING, COULD NOT JAPAN HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION SIMILAR TO THOSE OF EASTERN EUROPE AND FINLAND? ALTHOUGH FISHERIES TALKS BEGAN AGAIN BRIEFLY AFTER SONODA LEFT MOSCOW, THEY COLLAPSED WITHIN DAYS, AFTER SOVIETS CONTINUED TO PRESS JAPANESE TO ACCEPT DEFINITION OF SOVIET 200-MILE ZONE WHICH WOULD DEMOLISH JAPANESE LEGAL CLAIM TO NORTHERN ISLANDS.

2. REACTION IN JAPAN AGAINST SOVIETS HAS BEEN INTENSE AND UNITED. ALL OPPOSITION PARTIES, INCLUDING JAPANESE COMMUNISTS, HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS EXCORIATING SOVIET POSITION AND DEFENDING JAPAN'S CLAIM TO FOUR ISLANDS. (COMMUNISTS EXTENDED CLAIM TO ALL KURILES*). THOUGH MORE THAN THOUSAND JAPANESE FISHING BOATS REMAIN CONFINED TO PORT AND HARDSHIPS INCREASE DAILY, THERE HAS BEEN NO HINT FROM OUR SOURCES IN HOKKAIDO OR SEVERAL DIET MEMBERS

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CLOSE TO FISHING INTERESTS THAT FISHING COMMUNITY MOST AFFECTED BELIEVES GOJ SHOULD KNUCKLE UNDER TO SOVIETS. CONTROVERSY HAS FED HISTORICAL JAPANESE PREJUDICES AGAINST RUSSIANS AND LED TO OUTPOURING IN MEDIA AND PRESS OF ANTI-SOVIET MATERIAL AND INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS WITH CHINESE.

SOVIET MOTIVATIONS

3. QUESTION MOST OFTEN ASKED BY EMBASSY CONTACTS IS "WHY ARE SOVIETS DOING THIS?" SAME PERSONS GO ON TO SPECULATE THAT SOVIETS APPARENTLY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE IS OF GENUINE CONCERN TO ANYONE IN JAPAN BUT A SMALL HANDFUL OF ULTRA-CONSERVATIVES, AND ARE TRYING TO FORCE REMOVAL OF THIS OBSTACLE TO BETTER LONG-TERM RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND SOVIET UNION. SOVIETS REALLY APPEARED TO BELIEVE, ONE INDIGNANT FONOFF OFFICIAL TOLD US, THAT JAPAN WAS COMPARABLE TO FINLAND. FONOFF ANALYSTS ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SOVIETS HAVE PARTICULAR CURRENT INTEREST IN INCREASING THEIR CATCH QUOTAS NOW THAT 200-MILE ZONES AROUND WORLD HAVE DIMINISHED THEIR FISHING PROSPECTS, AND ARE

APPLYING WHATEVER LEVERAGE TERRITORIAL ISSUE CAN PROVIDE TO GAIN ADVANTAGE. IT IS CLEAR TO JAPANESE OBSERVERS FROM WAY KOSYGIN LECTURED SONODA THAT ANGER OVER JAPANESE COOPERATION WITH US IN EXPLOITING MIG-25 IS IMPORTANT SECONDARY COMPONENT OF SOVIET ATTITUDE. IT MAY ACCOUNT FOR NASTINESS IN SOVIET BEHAVIOR, IF NOT HARDNESS OF THEIR STAND. FINALLY, FONOFF ANALYSTS NOTE THAT THE SOVIETS SEEM MIFFED AT APPARENT CONTRAST BETWEEN JAPANESE WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER LONG-TERM ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENTS WITH CHINESE AND RELUCTANCE TO DO SO WITH SOVIET UNION. LAST SUMMER KEIDANREN CHAIRMAN DOKO STONEWALLED BREZHNEV'S PROPOSAL FOR CABINET COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE JOINT ECONOMIC POLICY AND LONG-TERM GOVERNMENTAL CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS. THIS APRIL HE WAS RECEPTIVE, IN PRINCIPLE AT LEAST, TO NEGOTIATING TEN-YEAR TRADE AGREEMENTS EXCHANGING CHINESE COAL AND OIL FOR JAPANESE MANUFACTURES.

4. GOOD PART OF BREAKFAST MEETING BETWEEN TEN LDP DIETMEN AND
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EMBOFFS APRIL 21 FOCUSSED ON SOVIET MOTIVES, WITH MUCH THE SAME CONCLUSIONS EMERGING AS THOSE ABOVE. WE DEFER, HOWEVER, TO EMBASSY MOSCOW IN TRYING TO FATHOM SOVIET MOTIVES.

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7184
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
USLO PEKING

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EXDIS

OUTLOOK

5. JAPANESE SEEM PREPARED TO WAIT. WITH JULY UPPER HOUSE ELECTION LOOMING, JAPANESE LEADERSHIP APPEARS TO HAVE CALCULATED THAT POLITICAL PENALTIES FOR CONCEDED ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE OUTWEIGH COSTS TO DOMESTIC FISHING INTERESTS. IN MEANTIME, WHATEVER UNITY COMMON ENMITY AGAINST SOVIETS CAN ENGENDER SEEMS SOMETHING OF GODSEND TO PRIMIN FUKUDA, WHOSE POPULARITY RATINGS HAVE BEEN LOWEST IN RECENT JAPANESE HISTORY. ALL PARTIES ARE WORKING TOGETHER WITH UNACCUSTOMED SPEED AND PURPOSE TO PUSH THROUGH DIET BILLS PROCLAIMING BOTH TWELVE-MILE TERRITORIAL SEA AND 200-MILE FISHING ZONE THAT WILL ENABLE JAPAN TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN MAY WITH STRONGER LEGAL HAND.

6. FONOFF ANALYSTS ESTIMATE THAT SOVIETS WILL REALIZE THAT THEY ARE DEALING WITH UNITED JAPANESE OPINION AND NOT JUST RIGHTIST MINORITY, AND THAT THEIR TOUGH LINE IS NOT HAVING DESIRED RESULT. AFTER DECENT INTERVAL THEY FEEL SOVIETS WILL AGREE TO VAGUER TERRITORIAL FORMULA THAT PERMITS EACH SIDE TO INTERPRET ISSUE IN ITS OWN WAY. FISHERIES AGREEMENT WILL THEN BE HAMMERED OUT IN USUAL TOUGH MANNER. IN MEANTIME, THEY DO NOT SEE ANY LASTING STRUCTURAL SHIFT IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH EITHER SOVIETS OR CHINESE RESULTING FROM CURRENT CONTROVERSY. THEY
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ACKNOWLEDGE THAT PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF RELATIONSHIP IS WORST IN YEARS AND SUGGEST THAT SIGNS OF DETERMINATION TO MOVE CLOSER TO CHINA MIGHT BE TACTICALLY DESIRABLE RIGHT NOW. THEY ARE DEVELOPING GUIDANCE FOR PRIME MINISTER ACCORDINGLY. THEY CONTINUE, HOWEVER, TO SEE JAPAN'S SECURITY BEST SERVED BY MAINTAINING WITH US BACKING STABLE POSITION BETWEEN THE PRC AND USSR, ENJOYING BUSY ECONOMIC LINKS WITH BOTH, BUT INTIMATE POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH NEITHER. AS ONE KEY DESK OFFICER PUT IT "ANY BREAK IN THE CARDINAL PATTERN WILL BRING NO BENEFIT TO JAPAN" OR FOR THAT MATTER TO SOVIET UNION. EMBASSY MOSCOW MAY ALSO WISH TO COMMENT ON THIS ASSESSMENT.

US POLICY

7. WHAT US MIGHT DO TO EASE PRESSURE ON JAPAN FROM USSR IS CURRENTLY TOPIC OF CONVERSATION WITHIN GOJ AND WAS BRIEFLY ALLUDED TO BY LDP DIET MEMBERS IN MEETING WITH EMBOFFS. FONOFF HAS PROPOSED DISCUSSING USSR-JAPAN RELATIONS AT A BILATERAL MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRIMIN FUKUDA AT UPCOMING ECONOMIC SUMMIT. THEY BELIEVE JAPAN WOULD DERIVE SOME COMFORT FROM CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS WITH SOVIETS, CHANCE THAT TIME DID NOT PERMIT DURING CARTER-FUKUDA WASHINGTON SUMMIT IN MARCH. INFORMAL THINKING ON HOW PRECISELY TO EXPLOIT SUCH MEETING TO BEST ADVANTAGE WITH SOVIETS NOW IS SIMPLY TO HAVE IT NOTED IN PUBLIC THAT THIS SUBJECT AMONG OTHER TOPICS OF MUTUAL INTEREST WAS DISCUSSED BY TWO LEADERS, AND LET IT GO AT THAT.

8. OUR INITIAL REACTION IS THAT THIS WOULD INDEED BE BEST APPROACH. WE SENSE A CURRENT OF FEELING THAT JAPAN IS IN TROUBLE WITH MAJOR POWER AND REQUIRES AT MINIMUM SYMPATHY AND COMFORT FROM ITS ALLY. INDICATION THAT WE ARE NOT INDIFFERENT TO PROBLEM WILL IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE BE READ TO MEAN WE CAN HAVE OUR DIFFICULTIES WITH JAPAN ON FISH, NUCLEAR-FUEL REPROCESSING, COLOR TV, ETC., BUT ALLIANCE IS ON SOLID GROUND. FONOFF CONTACTS HAVE SAID THEY WOULD LIKE TO EXCHANGE FURTHER THOUGHTS ON WHAT MIGHT
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BE DONE AND WILL BE BACK IN TOUCH WITHIN A FEW DAYS.

9. MODALITIES ASIDE, WE BELIEVE THAT TO THE EXTENT THAT OUR POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIETS PERMITS, IT WILL BE IN OUR INTERESTS TO OFFER THE GOJ OUR SUPPORT, AND TO LET THE JAPANESE KNOW THAT THE US IS NOT A DISINTERESTED OBSERVER OR A SYMPATHETIC NEUTRAL VIS JAPAN'S CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. AT A MINIMUM, THEREFORE, WE SHOULD LET THE GOJ KNOW THAT WE ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER WHATEVER PROPOSALS THEY MAY WISH TO SUGGEST ON THE FORM OUR SUPPORT COULD TAKE.
SHOESMITH

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